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The Bureau of Land Management began applying fertility control to both younger and older mares on the Pryor Mountain wild horse range (PMWHR) on July 12, 2004. The BLM analyzed this proposed action in an environmental assessment (EA) this spring with the Decision Record being signed on June 3, 2004.

The BLM began the effort this year with a cautious approach. It is believed that mountain lion predation has played a significant role in natural mortality of young horses this year. To date 64 percent of the 2004 yearlings and 75 percent of the 2004 foals have succumbed to natural mortality on the range. BLM has data which suggests that an older, aggressive female lion with two older kittens are contributing to the mortality this year.

Total herd size is now at 149 horses. Due to concerns for herd viability, the BLM has decided to booster only seven older mares (14 years of age and older) who have already contributed to the genetics of the herd. The BLM has also decided not to booster five yearling and three 2-year-old mares. These mares will be allowed to conceive normally in 2005 and produce foals in 2006. One remaining 2-year-old filly will be boosted. This filly is located at the lower elevations of the PMWHR where forage is limited, and she is in poorer body condition.

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One advantage to using a one-year fertility control agent with this herd is the flexibility it offers managers when faced with changing environmental conditions. As a result, no negative long-term impacts are expected on herd growth rates due to previous use of fertility control for compassionate reasons. This expected result is supported by extensive wild horse population-modeling.

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